

Nathaniel Sargent
from his Friend *and* *Lord L. Chandler*

O R A T I O N

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An Oration, &c.

TO think well of even the defects of our country, is a pardonable infirmity. To view them with indulgence,—to approach them with filial reverence and tenderness, and to cover them with the mantle of a partial, and almost blind affection, is a degree of virtue. But to value and boast her excellencies and blessings, to exult in her honor and be made happy by her happiness, is inseparable from every just mind, and generous heart. If this nationality of sentiment and feeling be suitable in her fathers, who are approaching the time, in which they will be unaffected by her fortunes, and released from her service ; it is truly graceful in her children, who, just parting, or parted, from the goal, must run with her their whole career of life ; and make and share her disgrace or glory, her misery or happiness. If this sensibility to her interests dignify age, and adorn youth at all times, it

does it *then* more than ever, when not only her rights are invaded, and her fame reproached, but a deadly potion is held to her mouth, and a murderous dagger aimed at her bosom.

THOUGH the eulogy of the blessings and prospects of *America* is so common, as to want the attraction of novelty ; and sometimes so extravagant, as to incur the imputation of vanity ; yet, in an exigency of her circumstances, which demands all the enthusiasm of patriotism, and engages all the feelings of philanthropy ; in an assembly, composed of persons, possessing, or anticipating more or less influence upon her opinions and conduct ; and in a place, consecrated to the sublime purpose of rearing her guides, her models, and her guardians ; it can be neither unpleasant nor uninstruative, to extol her felicity, to unfold her dangers, and to inculcate her duty.

AN ample field for splendid description, and for animating prophecy lies open, in the population, opulence, and prosperity of our country, in the fertility and variety of her soil, in the advantages of her climate and situation, in the abundance of her productions, in the extensiveness of her commerce, and the immensity of her resources. But it may be more useful and agreeable, on this occasion, to confine our attention to those PRINCIPLES, MAN-

NERS, and INSTITUTIONS, which are the price and pledge of all her other blessings ; and to illustrate our obligations and motives to cherish them, in their pure spirit and tendency, as they were possessed and transmitted to us by our predecessors, unadulterated by latter mixtures of error and vice.* These *principles, habits, and institutions* are not the ephemeral productions of the day ; not the nostrums of upstart political quackery ; not the novel discoveries of infidel philosophy ; not the vagaries of brains, distempered with revolutionary fervor ; but they are fabrics, raised by time, covered with the "venerable hoar" of years, founded in wisdom, improved by experience, and evinced the most sufficient barriers, that man can erect, against the inundations of vice, folly, and misery. They are, to our country, the "*tree of life in the midst of the city, which yields her fruit continually, the leaves whereof are for the healing of the nations.*" Let our wisdom and virtue guard it, as the cherubim and flaming sword, which turned every way, guarded the avenue to the tree of *Eden*. Let them defend it from the demons, infidelity, ambition, and faction, which are prowling

* THE text for this comment, is prepared by that man, whose name will be coeval with his country, in his address to the young men of the American metropolis. "Without wishing," says he, "to damp the ardor of curiosity, or influence the freedom of inquiry, I will hazard a prediction, that after the most industrious, and impartial researches, the longest liver of you all, will find no principles, institutions or systems of education, more fit in general to be transmitted to your posterity, than those, which you have received from your ancestors." Let not this prediction, so solemn and affectionate, be disregarded, lest we see the day of bitter, but ineffectual repentance.

ing around it, ready to pluck its fruits, to strip its foliage, with the blast of their breath, to kill its vegetating virtue, and with their vengeful axe to hew it down, and cast it into that fire, which is lighted at the infernal pile to lay waste the natural and moral world.

It would be no uninteresting labor, to attempt a minute delineation of the whole design and expression, colouring and drapery of the piece, on which our fathers, and we have been working; but the present opportunity will afford sufficient time only for sketching a few of its characteristic outlines.

THE first of the *political* principles, which we have received, a principle often expressed in very indefinite language, and whose misconception, or perversion, has in a manner annihilated society in one country in *Europe*, is this, "THAT ALL MEN ARE BORN FREE AND EQUAL." The blasphemies uttered, the crimes committed, and the desolation spread within the space of a few years, in the name of *liberty and equality*, have associated such turpitude and horror with the words, that the blood freezes, the heart sickens at their sound. Viewed in this association; instead of tutelary divinities demanding the love and veneration of men, for the blessings which they shed, they appear tremendous spectres, born of chaos and stalking through the earth with the scythe of destruction. If we see them only in the ex-

hibitions of these their pretended patrons and guardians, they are the agents of envenomed envy, of phrenzied ambition, and insatiate avarice, commissioned to go forth into the nations, and convert man into a brute, kingdoms into theatres of blood, and society into a dreary waste, on which "vegetates no plant but the hemlock and the night-shade;" they are another name for robbery, devastation, and murder; for a lofty and presumptuous independence of all laws, natural, civil, moral, and divine; an impious victory over all the motives and feelings, implanted by the Creator, to check and modify the infinitely diverging action of the human will and passions, and prevent the social state from being worse than a desert.

BUT breaking this unnatural association, we find that *we* have not so learned liberty, and that, well understood, it is the first of blessings. As it is taught in our school, the liberty of a nation, with respect to other nations, is the right of governing itself in consistency with their rights. Such a liberty we possessed, before our separation from the parent country, until her system of aggression began. We ever denied her claim to bind us in any case, without our consent. Since revolution has come to mean subversion, it means too much to be applied to that alteration of our political relations made by independence. We contended for preservation,

not acquisition, to keep the rights we had, rather than to gain those we never had ; and the separation was resorted to chiefly as a necessary means of maintaining the ancient ground. We are not therefore very much flattered, that our former ally should think we were complimented, in being told of our emancipation from actual rather than threatened slavery, by our revolutionary contest. We will not insult the ashes of our fathers, by admitting, for a moment, that they were ever "hewers of wood, and drawers of water," to any power on earth ; that they, who conveyed to us an abhorrence of slavery, ever submitted to it ; and we will correct the mistake, and repel the taunt of our hypocritical friend in the language of our illustrious son of liberty, assuring her, that every AMERICAN, was "BORN IN A LAND OF FREEDOM."* We have been taught not more resolutely to fix our grasp on our own independence, than *sincerely to respect the independence of other nations* ; to disdain the ambition of conquest and the meanness and treachery of interference with their internal concerns.

By *liberty*, as it respects our internal relations, we understand protection of rights ; and by *rights*, the claim of every member of the community to all the advantages which he can obtain and enjoy, without injuring others. These rights are declared to be the right to life and personal security, the right

* See Adet's address to the President on presenting the colours of the French Republic ; and the President's answer.

to acquire, hold, and transmit property, the right to liberty of action, the right to reputation, the right to liberty of opinion, of speech, and of religious profession and worship. But we consider all these rights subject to various limitations and exceptions. We deny that they allow any one to be judge in his own cause; or to exert them in any way inconsistent with law. Society here does not secure life to the murderer, freedom of action to the madman, property to the thief, robber, or knave, reputation to the villain, nor liberty of speech and writing to the tongues or pens, which mislead the ignorant or corrupt the pure, which blaspheme God and trumpet sedition. Our commonwealth claims to limit even the rights of conscience. Whilst it tolerates every denomination of religious teachers, it requires the maintenance of some denomination; and whilst it extends protection to the Jew, Mahometan, and Gentoo, it insists that a christian people will commit the enactment and administration of their laws to none but those, who profess to be christians.

IN the extension of like privileges to all persons in like circumstances, consists AMERICAN EQUALITY, an equality which secures the rich from rapacity, no less than the poor from oppression; the high from envy, no less than the low from contempt; an equality, which proclaims peace alike to the mansions of the affluent, and the humble dwellings of the poor.

OUR political fathers have taught us to distinguish between the right to protection, and the right to govern the state; to consider that the share which each member shall have in the management of public affairs, is a matter of convention and expediency, and not an original universal right of man. Whilst our Constitutions admit to the privilege of choosing, and being chosen, to public office, as many classes of the society, as consists with the general safety, they reject that doctrine of universal suffrage, which has so much contributed in other countries to pull down the fabric of social order. They disqualify from the exercise of political rights all persons not arrived to a certain age, and all persons destitute of property; presuming that without discretion, election is worse than a lottery; and that whilst proprietors will probably perceive a certain interest in order and justice, the extremely indigent may hope to profit by anarchy and rapine. For very different reasons they debar the better half of society from the direct exercise of the powers of civil government. Had the new theory of the *Rights of Women* enlightened the world at the period of the formation of our constitution, it is possible the framers, convinced by its arguments, might have set aside the old system of exclusion, upon which the world has always proceeded till this reforming age as selfish, illiberal, and tyrannical; perhaps they might have felt it absurd and insolent

for man to claim the honor of being the protector and guardian of woman; and pernicious also, if they had acknowledged with the champion of her sex's rights, that it is a consequence of the present order to compel woman to resort to art, insincerity, and meanness, in order to supply, by influence the want of prerogative. To disprove this consequence, however, we appeal to the simplicity and frankness of manners, and dignity of sentiment of American females; and to test this singular theory, we may submit to them the question, whether they are not as free, as lovely, as respectable, and happy, in their present situation in society, as they would be, if their sexuality of character, and employments were done away; and law and custom allowed them to exchange the distaff for the plough; the needle and the pencil for the axe and the hammer; and their stations as mistresses of their families, companions of their husbands, guides and protectors of their children, and equal sharers of domestic pursuits and pleasures; to be lawyers, legislators, and town meeting patriots. We submit to them, whether they are not content to make the best part of the object of all government, which is *society*, and to leave to us the drudgery and vexation, the contest and danger of providing the *means* of securing that object.

WE have learned that government, as well as liberty, is among the rights of the people, and that whilst they may establish, amend or alter their forms, all essential changes are to be attempted with a cautious and trembling hand. If we listen to the instruction which we have received, we shall not think ourselves at liberty capriciously to dissolve a partnership, which includes our posterity; wantonly to break up the foundations of the state, in order to build on the ruins a theoretic edifice, destitute of the aid of opinion, habit and attachment—nor shall we allow society to be “treated as a *carte blanche*, on which every man may scribble what he pleases.”

THESE are *our* rights of man; this is *our* liberty; this, *our* equality. There is another sort of liberty and equality, which we consider to be spurious—’tis fancy’s child, and folly is its father, made of such stuff as dreams are, and baseless as the fantastic visions of the evening,” and which we leave to those who choose it—to that *regenerated nation*, whose government considers the people as made for the government, and not the government for the people; preserves the freedom of elections by the bayonet, and coins money by the guillotine, makes it DEATH TO EMIGRATE, AND DEATH TO STAY AT HOME. We leave it to those wonderful philosophers, who in the plenitude of their wisdom, have no use for the fund accumulated by past ages; who have discovered,

that the collective good depends on the sacrifice of the individual good; that the end sanctifies the means; that property is a prejudice, and prescription of no validity, and we leave to them also, all the *order, justice, security, and liberty*, which they derive from their *precious* discoveries.

PATRIOTISM, rightly defined, has never been represented to us, as a doubtful virtue, still less as a vice. But since it is found an obstacle to the subjugation of man by certain metaphysical reformers and tyrants, they have set up the cant of universal benevolence, in which it is to be lost, as the drops in the ocean. Whoever heard before, that because we must love our neighbour, we must hate ourselves; or because we must desire the happiness of the world, we must be indifferent to that of our country; that we must neglect or destroy the parts, in our zeal to take care of the whole? We have learned to love our country, because it is our country; because we are near it, and in it, and have an opportunity of being useful to it; because we breathe its air and share its bounties; because the sweat of our fathers' brows has subdued its soil; their blood watered its fields, and their revered dust sleeps in its bosom; because it embraces our fathers and mothers, our wives and children, our brothers and sisters; because here are our altars, and here our firesides; because patriotism is the combined energy of the social affections, and he who can tear it from his heart, commits sacrilege upon his nature.

REVEALED religion has the venerable sanction of the wisest and best of our predecessors, joined to its own august authority. Those, who hold fast the form of sound words which they have delivered, can see neither dignity nor consolation in the separation of time from eternity; of man from his creator. From whom but the fountain of wisdom shall we derive the knowledge of our nature, origin and destiny? Does blindness need no guidance, perverseness no correction, weakness, no strength? Must no celestial light shine on the night of affliction? No immortal hope beam on the darkness of the grave? We are taught to believe that religion is the only support of morality, and revelation of religion. Unaided reason, unable to solve the difficulties of natural religion, proves the blind leader of the blind; and after alluring her followers by false and glimmering lights, leaves them enveloped with the darkness of atheism. Under the pavilion of religion only, can society find a covert from that tempest of the passions, which is ever ready to burst upon its head. Religion lays her hand on the movements of the heart, and directs her eye into the haunts of secret iniquity. She awes the insolence of the high, and represses the envy of the of the low. Destroy her influence, and universal tyranny ensues. Every man in power, knowing that others have no restraint from crimes but want of opportunity, will by every means keep the weak

in a state of depression ; and destroy his rivals, lest if they gain the ascendancy, they give his own neck to the yoke, or his head to the scaffold. Thus every man's hand is against every man, and society is a den of wild beasts.

THESE are some of the *principles*, which we have received from our ancestors. They have not been wholly ineffectual to produce pure *morals*, soft and social *manners*. Notwithstanding the relaxation of our sentiments and practices from those of our ancestors, we still keep so near to them, that it is honorable in the public opinion, to be rich without luxury and oppression, to be poor without envy and dishonesty ; to be just, faithful, and chaste. We trust there is but a small minority in our country, who are so venal as to put up their consciences to sale ; so abject, as to be the willing tools of base purposes ; so abandoned, as to become the panders of crime. We are not yet so divested of the prejudices of education, and the maxims of the nursery, that the insult of woman, the despoiler of innocence, the contemner of age ; the cruel or unfaithful husband, the the undutiful or thankless child, can escape detestation. With our present character, had we a revolutionary tribunal, it would probably be difficult to find one father the accuser of his son, one wife of her husband, one brother of his brother. The plague of this new philosophy, must reach further

into our vitals, before our balls and assemblies shall exhibit dresses *a la Grecque*; the people of our towns collected into cannibal mobs, point their pikes with the hearts of their victims; or our legislative assemblies vote marriage a tyranny, private property a prejudice and the patrimony of the nation; and turn a church into a pantheon for the deification of assassins and atheists.

To what do our fathers and we, as far as we have retained them, owe these principles and manners? We owe them under God to our excellent *institutions*. To our constitutions of government, and especially our federal constitution, checked and balanced according to the experience of ages, adapted to the opinions character, and habits of the people, and administered with consummate wisdom and integrity; to our *laws*, which erect barriers around our rights; to *public worship and instruction, and the observation of the Lord's day*, by which the ignorant are taught and the devious reclaimed; the social ties are strengthened and the worldly passions are moderated; to family government and instruction, which gives a right direction to the habits of youth; to our *schools and colleges*, the fountains of knowledge and subordination; to this Alma Mater, under whose bland influence and nurturing hand the germ of genius "expands into flowers and ripens into fruitage;" who separating her sons from the tumultuous

scenes of business and pleasure, prescribing the order of their studies and the rules of their conduct, conducts them up the steep ascent of science and virtue.

SUCH is a brief representation of the principles, manners, and institutions, which have descended to us from our ancestors, and deserve to be maintained and transmitted pure to our posterity. But have they been thus maintained? Will they be thus transmitted? There are spots in thy garments, my country. There is somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Many of thy children have degenerated from that spirit of order and religion, which marked the precepts and the example of their fathers. Let us inquire by what means we have been seduced from their path, and by what means we may regain and preserve it. Our contest for independence, by keeping our rights so much in view, drew our attention from our duties; and in our zeal to decorate liberty with her cap, we for a time forgot to arm law with her sword. The interruption of the course of justice, the fluctuation of property, the paper medium and tender laws, and the foreign connexions, which sprung out of war, were so many channels for the introduction of licentiousness; and the prosperity which attended peace and neutrality, has been lulling to sleep reflection and public virtue in her luxurious lap: whilst de-

riving corruption from internal sources, we have
 felt the bane of foreign influence, and been "contam-
 inated with the foul abominations of the revolution
 in France." With credulous fondness we pressed
 her to our bosoms ; and she has bitten like a serpent,
 and stung like an adder. The pestilence, which she
 sent forth, to walk in darkness, and waste at noonday,
 here met constitutions predisposed to its reception.
 The seeds of her democracy, her infidelity, and im-
 morality, being sown with those of our own soil, they
 have been growing up together into rank luxuriance
 and spreading from field to field.

THANKS to the God of our fathers, whose provi-
 dence has led us to discover the tares, which the fo-
 reign and domestic enemy have scattered, and rous-
 ed us to unite, in plucking them up by their roots.
 We would not hear him in the whispers of his mer-
 cy ; and he has kindly awakened us by the thunders
 of his judgments. Thoughtless and ungrateful, we
 neglected our government in her prosperity ; but her
 day of trial has engaged our hearts and hands, rich-
 es and strength in her support. We could not
 preserve our connexion with our Gallic ally in her
 present state, without the loss of freedom and virtue ;
 and that connexion is mercifully broken. Her friend-
 ship would have proved our infamy ; and we are
 honored with her enmity ; and are taught the impi-
 ety and folly of having supposed there could be com-

union between christians and atheists, freemen and tyrants. We have returned to ourselves, and are Americans. We see the precipice on which we have stood and are eagerly stepping back. May the enthusiasm, in the cause of our altars and laws, which the exigency has kindled, become a habit of our souls, and live, a vestal fire, in every American bosom.

RESISTANCE is begun on the sea. Events may demand it on our shores. In a cause like ours, what christian or patriot, will not dare to combat and to perish? Should the fortune of war allot him the cypress for the laurel, it will quicken the last beat of his heart, to reflect that he dies to save his country. And should she not be saved, but the inexplicable scheme of Providence suffer her to sink under the overwhelming ruin let loose upon the world, we may be assured, that before such an event, all her best blood will be shed; that existence here to a true American will be worse than ten thousand deaths, and to have been an early victim in her cause will be a favored lot.

WHILST we unite in the defence of our country, let us unite in rendering and preserving her worthy to be defended. To this end let the pure principles, the virtuous manners, and the useful institutions, inherited from our ancestors, be retained and perfected. Be not carried about by every wind of political doctrine; but inflexibly adhere to the maxims

and forms of government which you have received; and cling to their administration with the grasp of death. Maintain order and instruction in your families; and provide liberally for the means of education. If you wish to keep alive religion in yourselves or others, suffer not your Sundays to be perverted to amusement, your bibles to be the lumber of your shelves, or your churches to be neglected. Let your literary sons aim as well to be good as great; lest knowledge multiply the objects of desire, whilst it leaves them destitute of principle to direct their choice and pursuit of those objects; and superior talents be only qualifications for more extensive mischief. Let those, who become members of this ancient seminary, be just to its eminent advantages, draw a respectful veil over imperfections more or less inseparable from every human institution; and never permit that spirit of misrule, which scourges the world and menaces the state, to disturb and dishonor this chosen retreat. Let your sons and daughters be sensible that virtue, and not wealth, fame, pleasure, beauty, or accomplishments is their chief good. Our fair countrywomen, especially are invited to recollect the indisputable truth, that the spirit of christianity has contributed more than any thing to give them the respectable and deserved rank, which they now hold in society in *Europe* and *America*.— This spirit, by making the marriage contract indissol-

luble, and representing woman as endowed with the same intellectual and moral nature as man, has enforced his respect ; and raised her from being the drudge of his indolence, or the instrument of his pleasure, to be his companion, his equal, his counselor, and his friend. Far from our youth be those absurd and unnatural manners, which the innovating spirit of the times has made fashionable, which disregard the gradations and distinctions of nature and society ; and placing the young on a level with the old, the child with the parent, and the pupil with the instructor, annul the claim of age to respect, and of authority to submission.

THE poison of the skeptical and disorganizing philosophy, which is now perverting and corrupting man, has been administered in writings, many of which want no confidence of assertion to overawe, no subtilty of argument to perplex, no sprightliness of wit to amuse, and no charms of eloquence to entice. But whilst to indulge curiosity, to taste the beauties of composition, or to gratify the vanity of general reading we peruse them ; it is at the hazard of being entangled in their sophistry, and depraved by their immoral sentiments. It is proper advice to all, at least to such, whose minds are immature, and whose habits are unformed ; look not into their infectious pages. Tread not on the bed of flowers, under which a serpent lurks. " What ! forbid free in-

quiry?" Forbid imprudent, rash, indiscriminate inquiry; inquiry which can do us little good; and may do us infinite mischief. The intense heat of this untried region, will melt the waxen wings of the indiscreet *Icarus*, who disdains the bounded flight of his father and plunge him into the sea of doubt and despair. Will the wise man, who counts the cost, leave safety in the camp, to attack the enemy with unequal force in the field? Will the traveller, who wishes to secure an agreeable journey, forsake the beaten road, at the peril of being entangled in inextricable wilds? Believe not that discoveries are to be made in morality; or that any way will be found of existing happily in this world, or in the next, but that which the Lord our God hath illuminated with the brightness of a sunbeam, "Do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with thy God." These men cant about universal benevolence, sensibility, and morality. Disinterested benevolence! which teaches, that the vilest means are consecrated by a benevolent end, and that it is noble to destroy the parts to serve the whole. Sweet sensibility! which feels for every thing except that which touches it; for all mankind, except those with whom it is in contact, and to whom it may be useful; which weeps over the injustice of governments, and sends its children to the hospital. Rigid morality! which is shocked with the vices of society, and charmed

with the purity of the natural state, yet writes licentious novels for the rich, which plants a sting in the conscience for stealing an apple, and seduces a wife, and betrays a friend, without self-reproach.

WHATEVER fascination there might be to some fanatical or corrupt minds, in the principles of the nation, which these philosophers have put into their crucible, one would think there could be none to any in their conduct. For any to approve or justify, must be to resemble it. But the most virtuous need to guard against the effect of familiarity with such enormous vice in blunting the moral sensibility. So pestilential is its nature, that to look at it is dangerous, to look at it with the least indulgence is pollution, to embrace it is death.

AMERICANS, whilst you study improvement, shrink from innovation. Difficult enough is the preservation of order with all the aid, which it derives from antiquity, authority, opinion, and habit. Remember, that confidence not jealousy is the first of republican virtues; that to settle, not change our civil systems is the business of our time, and that the spirit of complaint and opposition should be reserved for the medicine of the Constitution, when it shall grow old and diseased, and not administered as its daily food, while it is in the bloom of youth and of health. Such empiricism, will soon make it as

disordered as its enemies pretend ; and drug it into a malady, which has no cure, but death.

If, as men, as members of society, and christians, we will be thus instructed, we shall obtain, for our country all the happiness, which a nation can possess in this state of mingled good and evil, and for ourselves the unfailing consolation of an approving mind, and a trust in God in this world ; and beyond the line of time, a reward, vast as our desires, and lasting as our existence.

